# Thrasymachus

## Or

## THE FUTURE OF MORALS

By

C. E. M. JOAD

IN this penetrating study Mr. Joad considers the nature of herd, or conventional, morality to-day, and forecasts its development in the immediate future.

He prophesies a Puritan revival in morals, expressing itself in intolerance and heresy-hunting, combined with an increase in irregular sexual relationships due to birth-control and the economic independence of women.

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BY

C. E. M. JOAD

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# THRASYMACHUS

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## CHAPTER I

### Morality as the Interest of the Stronger

Thrasymachus appears in the first book of Plato's *Republic,* in which the speakers discuss the nature of Justice. Several tentative definitions of Justice are given, which Socrates has no difficulty in showing to be inadequate by the peculiarly irritating methods of dialectic for which the Athenians so excusably poisoned him. Thrasymachus then breaks in. He is a blustering, overbearing personage, who makes long speeches instead of answering Socrates' questions, and, when driven into a corner, charges the latter rather irrelevantly with having a bad cold and omitting to use his handkerchief.

Required to sustain an unpopular thesis, he is not unnaturally represented as an offensive person. The trick is an old one and argues well for Plato's sense of dramatic fitness. It should not, however, blind us to the plausibility of

Thrasymachus' position. Justice, he says, is the interest of the stronger. Asked how he maintains this view, he points out that the stronger control the government and make the laws. These laws are not unnaturally made in their own interest; in other words, matters are so contrived that, by the mere process of obeying the laws, citizens are led to further the interests of those who govern them. Morality, which is the name we give to law-abiding conduct, is, therefore, a device on the part of the rulers to ensure subservience and contentment on the part of their subjects. Since subservient subjects are a joy and a credit to intelligent rulers, we may say that justice, and indeed morality in general, is the interest of the stronger.

The view that morality is unnatural to human beings and is imposed by law in the teeth of primitive instincts which are fundamentally non-moral, recurs at pretty regular intervals throughout the recorded history of what passes for human thought. It rests upon what is called the social contract theory of society, and leads to the conclusion that human nature is fundamentally wicked.

The life of man in a state of nature was, as the philosopher Hobbes tells us, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." His hand was against his fellows and every

man's hand was against him. Men acted offensively [1] towards each other as and when they pleased, and were restrained by nothing but fear for their own safety. Finding this state of affairs intolerable, men agreed to renounce their natural right to act offensively towards their fellows on condition that their fellows made a similar concession as regards themselves. The best thing of all, of course, was to do what you liked to others without their having the right to retaliate. Since this seemed impracticable, the next best thing was to renounce the full liberty to do what one liked, seeing that it was attended by the obviously unpleasant consequence to oneself of a similar liberty in others, and to venture only upon those actions that the law allowed. Society then was a *pis aller*. Your neighbour, it was true, could not harm you, but then no longer could you work your own sweet will upon your neighbour. Men lived at peace with one another, not because they were naturally peaceable and law abiding, but because they feared the consequences of being

[1] The term 'acting offensively' in this connection is used to cover primitive conduct of the kind which is supposed to attract wicked and violent men, as, for example, carrying off your neighbour's wife, raping his daughter, stealing his spoons, bashing in or otherwise mutilating his face, and so forth.

found out if they were not. Once that fear of consequences was removed, they would revert to their primitive, natural wickedness. Let a man, for example, learn how to become invisible at will and, as Plato points out, no virgin would be safe, no strong box unrifled. Man, then, is made moral by law; he is not moral by nature.

Now the man who makes the laws is in one sense like the man who has learnt how to become invisible. I do not mean that he can break the laws with impunity, but he can see to it that he has no incentive to break them. Thus we have the majestic impartiality of the modern law which forbids rich and poor alike to sleep in doorways. He can also, as Thrasymachus points out, ensure that, so long as others keep them, his own power will be automatically safeguarded. And, since the law is at once the prop and the mirror of the public opinion of the community, and, since the public opinion of the community is in matters of conduct at once the guardian and the arbiter of conventional morality, we may further say that the habit of acting in a way of which the public opinion of the community approves will be found to conduce to the maintenance of the *status quo,* and hence to the interests of those whom the *status quo* suits.

In the early eighteenth century Bernard Mandeville revived and elaborated the doctrine of Thrasymachus. Society was devised by skilful politicians for their own advantage. This they hoped chiefly to secure by the spread of what was called morality. Addressing themselves, therefore, to men's pride, they pointed out that man had always considered himself to be superior to the brute beasts. Yet, if he indulged his passions as soon as he conceived them and gave way alike to sensual desire and violent rage, wherein did his superiority consist? Surely in order to demonstrate their superiority men must learn to master their appetites and restrain their passions. The plain man listened to the words of the flatterer, and, aspiring to live the higher life, transformed himself from a savage into a clerk. The process is known as civilization.

Tamed by his own conceit, man was now fit to live in society. As a social animal he regards as virtuous every action on the part of others by which the society to which he belongs is benefited, and stigmatizes as vicious the indulgence of private appetites irrespective of the public good.

But the skilful politicians who had planned the thing from the beginning had taken good care to ensure that the

good of society should be identical with their own advantage. Uncivilized man is ungovernable man, but man tamed and tractable, with the bees of social virtue and social service buzzing in his citizen's bonnet, is at once the prop and the dupe of unscrupulous governments. "From which", as Mandeville says, "it is evident that the first rudiments of morality broached by skilful politicians to make men useful to each other as well as tractable, were chiefly contrived that the ambitious might reap the more benefit from, and govern vast numbers of them with the greater ease and security."

To those who object that morality was invented by God and not by politicians, and that the sanctions of right conduct are derived not from social utility but from divine ordinance, it should be observed that God himself is the most potent instrument yet devised for securing the performance of conduct beneficial to the stronger. This at least is true of the great bulk of the gods who have figured in history. On this point perhaps it would be best to let the stronger speak for themselves. Napoleon may be taken as a suitable representative.

"What is it," he writes, "that makes the poor man think it quite natural that there are fires in my parlour while he is dying of cold? That I have ten coats in

my wardrobe while he goes naked? That at each of my meals enough is served to feed his family for a week? It is simply religion which tells him that in another life I shall be only his equal, and that he actually has more chances of being happy there than I. Yes, we must see to it that the floors of the churches are open to all, and that it does not cost the poor man much to have prayers said on his tomb." Thenceforward, though an avowed free thinker, Napoleon set his face sternly against anti-Christian and anti-clerical legislation.

The moral is sufficiently obvious. Men whose lives are miserable and oppressed will either rise in revolt against their misery and servitude, or console themselves with the prospect of generous compensation hereafter. If steps are taken to ensure that their faith is sufficiently lively, they will look to the next world to supply them with the divine equivalents of the champagne and cigars they are missing in this one, an expectation which confers obvious advantages upon those whom it enables to monopolize the champagne and cigars. Tack on the further belief that riches and power in this world are the best guarantees of torment and anguish in the next, and the utility of religion to "the stronger" is sufficiently manifest. The parable of the needle's eye

and the story of Lazarus have been responsible for a political and social quietism among the many, which do credit to the political acumen of the early governing class realists who slipped them into the text of the New Testament; and whenever that quietism has showed signs of giving way, a religious revival or the endowment of a church has usually been found the most effective method of dealing with the situation.

"In 1818 one Englishman out of seven being at that time a pauper, Parliament voted a million of public money for the construction of churches to preach submission to the higher powers. In the debates in the House of Lords, Lord Liverpool took occasion to lay stress on the social importance of guiding by this means the opinions of the masses who were for the first time beginning to receive education."[1] God, it seems, is cheaper than a living wage, and no less effective as a means of securing social contentment.

To its superior utility in this respect we must in part attribute the success of Christianity. Of all religions known to man it lays the greatest stress upon those virtues whose practice is advantageous to the stronger. It glorifies weakness and sentimentalizes over failure; its heaven

[1] *The Town Labourer*, by J. L. and Barbara Hammond.

is for the submissive and the inefficient; its hell for the dominant and the proud. Just as the charitable worker takes the revolutionary edge off poverty by distributing coal and blankets to the victims of acute industrial distress, so the priest promotes submissiveness by inculcating the duties of sobriety, meekness, unselfishness, honesty, and contentment. These virtues make good workmen and prosperous employers, and, if they are only developed to a sufficient degree, will enable their fortunate possessors cheerfully to put up with bad wages, long hours, wretched houses, and social servitude. The contrary virtues of manliness, self-reliance and independence springing from a spirit passionately resentful of injustice, quick to resist an injury and idealistically determined to make a better place of this world instead of waiting passively for the next one, are discouraged as savouring of pride and self-sufficiency, and as showing a reprehensible tendency to look for help to oneself instead of to God, our helper in time of trouble. The rich, to be sure, possess these virtues; but then the message of religion is *from,* not *to,* the rich.

But Thrasymachus has yet one more observation to make to us before we leave him to turn to the future. The penalty of law breaking on a small scale is prison,

and of trivial wickedness, social ostracism. But what of law-breaking on a large scale, and a wickedness powerful enough to flout the public opinion to which others succumb? These are the qualities of the stronger and they reap the stronger's reward. The rebel is the patriot who fails, the patriot is the rebel who prevails. This is the lesson of the past, and those who read it may learn that if only they are strong enough to succeed, they need not trouble themselves about the respectability of their credentials. Nor has the position altered to-day. The man who steals a leg of mutton goes to prison for a month; the captain of industry grown rich on the profits stolen from his workmen gets a knighthood. The man who has murdered the wife who has annoyed him gets hanged for his pains; the man who kills his fellow men for nourishment is denounced as a cannibal; but the great general who plans the death of vast multitudes of his fellows whom he has never seen, with whom he has never exchanged a cross word and whom he does not require for purposes of sustenance, is hailed as the saviour of his country.

Thus those who commit injustice, yet have the wit or the good fortune to escape the consequences of their actions, climb into the seats of the stronger and share their immunity from moral restrictions. Since, in the mere process of gratifying

their tastes, they are enabled to give employment to large bodies of their fellows, they are accounted public benefactors whose wealth constitutes a social asset. And, should vestiges of the morality of the weaker, from whose ranks they have risen, assail them in the form of conscience, they discover that even the gods can be squared and that a liberal support of deserving charities, coupled with the occasional endowment of a church, are calculated—so they are assured—to procure for them as honoured a place in the hereafter as their own successful injustice has obtained for them in the present.

Thus Thrasymachus' phrase "morality is the interest of the stronger" has a double significance. In the first place, it defines the morality of the many as that kind of conduct which promotes the interest of the few; in the second, it assures to the successful few the honourable reputation, the social consideration and the good repute among their fellows, which are commonly supposed to be the rewards of morality.

## CHAPTER II

### Herd Morality and the New Tyranny of Thought

The statement of general principles in the preceding chapter was not undertaken solely for the pleasure of political and ethical speculation. My concern is a more practical one. If the principle that justice is the interest of the stronger is the explanation of what passes for morality, what, I wish to ask, is its application in the present and what is it likely to be in the immediate future?

In order to answer these questions we must first consider a further one: Who in a modern community is the stronger?

The fact that we are a democracy has not escaped notice. In our own day it is not kings, nobles, soldiers, prelates, politicians, or elected persons who are the stronger, but the common man, the plain man, the average man, the man in the street, whether city man or working man, and the crowd or herd of such men. He, or rather his female counterpart since she is more numerous even than he is, is the arbiter of morality, and the

kind of conduct which is called moral is that which is convenient or pleasing to her.

Plato with his usual acumen foresaw the possibility of this development, and was careful to provide for it within the bounds of Thrasymachus' formula. All that it is necessary to do if we wish to apply the formula to a democracy is to invert it; for 'stronger' read 'weaker', and the formula remains unaltered. The practicability of this inversion is demonstrated by one Callicles, in the Dialogue called *Gorgias*. Most men are stupid, irresolute, apathetic, mediocre, timid, and unimaginative. The qualities implied by these epithets, though discernible at all times, force themselves most pressingly upon the attention when men act together. Take a sheep and stand it on its hind legs and its resemblance to a human being is scarcely noticeable; but stand a flock of sheep on their hind legs and, so far as psychology and behaviour go, you have a crowd of men. In other words, taken severally men may be individuals; taken together they are a mere transmitting medium for herd emotion. Their individual stupidities are added together, but their individual wisdoms cancel out.

In a democracy, says Callicles, the common men are the more numerous,

they also possess the power; acting, therefore, in accordance with their natures, they make the laws which their natures demand. Now it is natural for every man to wish to obtain as much as he can. It is also inevitable that in a state of nature the stronger should obtain more than the weaker. Hence the weaker, acting in self-defence, so frame the laws that the endeavour of one individual to obtain more than the many is stigmatized as unjust. Hence justice, or morality, which is now revealed as the interest of the individually weaker but collectively stronger, may be regarded as their device for depriving the stronger of the preponderance of good things, which the strongers' superior talents would naturally procure for them.

What we may call herd morality is, therefore, a form of self-defence dictated partly by fear, and partly by envy. The source of the fear is obvious; the envy springs from the natural spite of inferior persons who are conscious of their inferiority, resent it, and wish to take it out of those who make them feel it. "I have not," says the average man, "the capacity of the strong man for acquiring a large share of the good things of life. Therefore I will take advantage of my numbers to lay it down that such acquisition is wrong and unjust." The

common view of self-denial may be taken as an illustration. The average man has neither the courage nor the strength to satisfy his desires and indulge his passions. Being unaccustomed to moderation he thinks that if he permits himself any indulgence he will be unable to stop. He dare not bend for fear he break. Hence for the Greek virtue of temperance we get the modern praise of self-denial, with a resultant standard of morality which denounces all bodily indulgence as wrong. Upon the basis of this standard of morality the principle of sour grapes proceeds to operate on a large scale. The man who is not rash enough to take sexual pleasure when he finds it, the woman who is not attractive enough to have the opportunity of being rash, combine to denounce the delights at which the independent and the charming are not afraid to grasp.

Herd morality, which is based on fear and envy, is made effective by blame. In modern society the power to blame is chiefly expressed in two ways. First, by the old whose morality consists in blaming the young; secondly, by the average whose censure descends upon the exceptional.

Upon the part played by the old in maintaining morality I do not wish to dwell, since it differs little to-day from what it has always been. A mistake

which all societies have made is to entrust the management of their affairs to the old. Old men are naturally more vindictive, bad tempered, malevolent, and narrow-minded than young ones. They are easily provoked to disapproval, and dislike more things than they like. Having for the most part lived their own lives, they have nothing left to do but to interfere in the lives of others. They form the governments, misrepresent the people whom they oppress, preach to the people whom they exploit, and teach the people whom they deceive. They mete out rewards and punishments, sentence criminals to death, direct businesses, make laws which they have no temptation to disobey and wars in which they do not propose to fight. If the country were handed over exclusively to the governance of men under thirty-five, and everybody over that age were forbidden to interfere on pain of being sent to the lethal chamber, it would be a happier and a better place. Unfortunately the young men are too busy trying to make a living in the subordinate positions to which the old men grudgingly admit them to have the time or energy to interfere with other people. Besides, being young, they wish to live, a process for which the regulation of the lives of others is a poor substitute.

In the sphere of morality the function

of the old is confined to discovering methods of deterring the young from pleasures of which they themselves are no longer capable. Old men give young men good advice, no longer being able to give them bad examples, and old women invent a symbolic Mrs. Grundy to intimidate their daughters into resisting the temptations which now pass them by. The deterrent influences so exercised are called morality under which name they impose on the young who will not have caught their elders lying often enough to disbelieve them, until they have begun to produce sons and daughters of their own, by which time they will be only too ready to abet the prevailing hypocrisy.

The other strand in the fabric of modern morality has already been noticed as the tendency of the weaker to get even with the stronger by taking it out of him on moral grounds. Morals, it is thought, are everybody's privilege and everybody's possession. Few of us can understand Einstein's theory of relativity, but we all know the difference between right and wrong. Hence the man who is deficient in talent can make up for it in virtue, and by assuring himself that God's noblest work is an honest man, put brains and capacity in their proper place.

Since the motives which have prompted its invention persist unchanged, morality,

which has always been the special emanation of the herd, varies little in spite of superficial differences from age to age, whilst intellectuality throws off new lights in every age. There is probably very little difference between the crowds of ancient Babylon and modern Clapham, but the mind of Einstein differs in radical particulars from that of Archimedes.

Realizing that any fool can be good intellectuals have always made light of morality for the same reasons as those which have caused the herd to set store by it. If the herd has been ready to censure the eccentrics, the eccentrics have been even readier to provide materials for censure. Despising the mob, they flout their standards and laugh at their scruples. The good are so harsh to the clever, the clever so rude to the good, that one might almost be tempted to believe in a fundamental antipathy between virtue and brains. Whether this be so or not, it seems probable that there is a permanent necessity in our natures requiring us to exalt the common qualities we share and understand, and to condemn rare gifts. Thus morality represents the average man's attempt to console himself in the face of the insulting superiority of the few, by proving that the superiority is achieved only at the cost of loss of virtue. Certainly we must take it out of

these fellows somehow! It tortures our self-respect to admire those who have qualities we cannot possess. That is why we love to think of the philosopher as an absent-minded fool, incapable of feeding himself, writing cheques or catching trains, and listen so greedily to the legends of vice and voluptuousness in men of genius.

Wickedness in high places is so much more appetizing than wickedness in low; it enables us to prove that those who are inconsiderate enough to rise above us in place and power, only do so at the cost of falling below us in simplicity and virtue. The public lips have recently been smacking over the details of a case in which it was alleged that a wife endeavoured to advance the career of her husband by a liaison with the Quarter Master General of H.M. Forces. It was further alleged that the husband condoned and even encouraged her conduct. The Quarter Master General was a man of marked ability. His organizing and administrative capacity were justly famous; he was, in fact, one of the few brilliant successes of the War. When the rumour spread that this man, one of the most powerful as well as the ablest in the land, had been willing to advance a subordinate because he desired his wife, the outburst of public indignation

in the press was tremendous. Wickedness in high places was a glorious theme: there had been nothing like it since the Armistice. Labour bodies met to insist on the superior purity of the lives of working-people, and parsons thundered in their pulpits against the luxury of the rich. For several weeks the Dennistoun case was the chief subject of conversation in trains, 'buses, and bar-parlours, and those whose lips smacked the most greedily over the luscious scandal were the most severe in their condemnation of the vices of society.

Why was it that this case attracted so much attention? Why was the wickedness involved considered so shocking? Why did those who would not have looked twice at the six-line paragraph describing a similar occurrence in the remoter suburbs, follow every detail of the case with the most avid curiosity? Because the woman was unusually beautiful, the man unusually powerful and talented. The beauty of the woman aroused the envy of other women; the power and talents of the man excited the envy of other men.

We all of us have an impulse to blame those whom life has more generously gifted or more fortunately bestowed than ourselves. We make a virtue of our deficiencies, argue that only the dull and

lowly are good, and call the feeling of envy which we experience for those who are neither dull nor lowly moral indignation.

In addition to the envy of the old for the young and of the herd for the exceptional, the impulse to blame, which men call morality, owns another source. This is the desire for uniformity. The desire for uniformity springs in its turn from the fear of insecurity. Society, said Schopenhauer, is like a collection of hedgehogs driven together for the sake of warmth. The object of social observances is to put felt upon the spikes in order that the proximity of the hedgehogs may not cause them to injure one another. The risk of friction will be reduced to a minimum if all the hedgehogs behave in the same way. Identical behaviour in all circumstances is, no doubt, an unattainable ideal; but this makes it doubly important that the herd as a whole should know within limits in what way each of its members *will* behave. Those who react unexpectedly to familiar situations, or differ markedly in their conduct from others are a danger to the herd, causing social friction and a sense of insecurity. For this reason reformers like Christ or Ibsen, who violently question the standards of thought and conduct prevalent in their herd, and

refuse to conform to them, are regarded with bitter hostility.

The method by which the herd secures the uniformity of conduct upon which its comfort and security depend is the exercise of social approval and disapproval. In extreme cases this method is forcibly employed. The soldier who shows a tendency to run away under the enemy's fire endangers the safety of his fellows. Steps are accordingly taken to check this tendency by the pressure of social disapproval in the form of discipline. Discipline is a device for substituting the certainty of being shot for those who do not go over the top for the probability of being shot for those who do. The result is that most soldiers go over the top. This is conduct conducive to the safety of the herd, and is rewarded with social approval under the name of courage.

More usually social approval and disapproval find expression in the sphere of manners and modes. In Japan under the old laws the term for a rude man is "other-than-expected fellow", and a noble is not to be interfered with in cutting down a fellow who has behaved to him in a manner other than is expected. In general, thought or conduct calculated to surprise or disturb the herd incurs disapproval and is called immoral; thought and conduct which mirrors the

beliefs and habits of the herd is regarded with approval and is called moral. Thus virtue is the habit of acting in a manner of which other people approve; vice in a manner of which they disapprove.

Summing up, therefore, we may say that social morality in a democracy springs from the envy of the average man for the talents of the able man which cause him to feel inferior, and from the dislike of the herd for the conduct of the eccentric which makes it feel unsafe.

These are general principles and are more or less applicable in any state of society which is not a tyranny or a close oligarchy. What I wish to emphasize is their special application to a modern western democracy.

In a community of this type the herd is at once more congested and more powerful than it has been in any other period of history. Its congestion causes it to place a hitherto unparalleled emphasis upon the necessity for felting the spikes of the hedgehogs, that is to say, upon the importance of uniformity; its power enables it to vent its disapproval upon those who offend its prejudices with the maximum effect. This can be seen most clearly in the case of America which has produced the most congested [1] and the

[1] The word 'congested' is used to denote the oppression of spiritual stuffiness rather than of physical overcrowding.

most powerful herd on record. America is a melting pot in which all the races of the earth are fused. The natural diversity of its elements produces a special need for artificial uniformity in its citizens. A civilization with its roots in the earth can allow its members to spread outwards, like the branches of a tree; a civilization, whose seeds are planted in shallow soil, must hedge them about lest they be scattered by the wind. The first is centrifugal: it can tolerate individuality because it has a centre. The second is centripetal: it must enforce uniformity because it has none.

For this reason all American citizens strive to be exactly like each other, and, on the whole, they succeed. They have the same clothes, they live in the same houses, they have the same social habits, the same respect for money and the same suspicion of such superfluous eccentricities as thought, culture, and art.

A friend of mine, who had wintered in a Southern State, as the season advanced discarded his felt hat for the regulation straw. A few weeks later he had occasion to travel northwards to New York. As he left the train he noticed that he was an object of attention to people on the platform. Porters and loungers stared, and as he walked away from the station, he found himself followed

by a small and apparently hostile crowd. Hailing a taxi, he drove to his hotel. In the porch he met an acquaintance, told him of the notice he had attracted, and asked the reason. His friend explained the matter by pointing to his straw hat. It was too early in New York for the change over into straws, he said, and of course one could not dress differently from other people.

The rigid enforcement of uniformity is hostile not only to freedom of action but also to independence of thought. The laws against teaching or holding doctrines displeasing to the majority are particularly severe in America. Immigrants, for example, are not allowed to land in America until they have first expressed their disbelief in Communism, atheism, and free love. Many people are put in prison for holding unpopular views, although these views do no apparent harm to anybody. Advocacy of birth-control, possession of irreverent and disreputable books such as *Jurgen,* expression of subversive opinions with regard to the relationship of capital and labour, and disbelief in God are among the offences so punished.

Not only is it necessary not to profess unpopular views—it is sometimes necessary to profess popular ones. In order to placate herd opinion it is found necessary to enforce by law the propagation

of deliberate falsehood. This happens especially in those cases, unfortunately only too numerous, in which the truth is less gratifying to human conceit than we could wish, so that its adoption involves the abandonment of cherished beliefs. Such, for instance, is the belief that man is a degenerate angel, which is thought to be more flattering than the truth that he is a promoted ape. Thus the State of Tennessee has recently officially repudiated the "monkey ancestry" of its citizens. A law has been passed under which it is illegal for any teacher in a university or other public school to teach anything denying the story of creation given in the Bible, or that man has descended from the lower order of animals, and men have already been imprisoned for teaching evolution. It is not, so far as I know, maintained even in America that the doctrine of evolution is untrue. It is sufficient that it incurs the disapproval of the stronger. Thus truth herself is liable to be stigmatized as immoral if she is inconsiderate enough to flout the wishes of respectable citizens.

Where individuality is to a large extent obliterated, and citizens are cut according to approved specification by the social machine, nothing is so much valued as personality. I have said that every

American wishes to be like every other American, and so he does—but with a difference. He wants to have a personality of his own. He wishes to have a something about him that will convey an impression of uniqueness and cause him to be talked about among his fellows. Nothing is so much discussed in America as personality. Men try to cultivate it as they try to cultivate biceps; agencies exist in order to tell you how to be unique, and psycho-analysts flourish by the simple process of telling you that you are unique.

But this is just what the conditions upon which herd morality depends will not let you be. Depart one hair's-breadth from the standard habits of thought and accepted codes of conduct, and the herd will make your existence intolerable until you consent to toe the line.

Now the drift of British development follows increasingly the course set by America. America is our most advanced nation in morals as in everything else, and, if we want to know what England will be like to-morrow, we cannot do better than look at America to-day. America is at once a signpost and a stimulus. What American business men are, that do our business men strive humbly to be. They ape their magnificence, and enjoy a large and increasing share of this power. The stockbroker's conception of the good

life is becoming increasingly accepted by the clerk, the clerk's by the shopkeeper, the shopkeeper's by the workman, so that the community as a whole is doing its best to live up to the standard which its business men set. So soon as we have got rid of the last vestiges of our dying aristocracy, such as respect for hunting and a semi-feudal tenantry, we shall subside into an inferior and imitative satellite of the States.

The objects of American civilization are to substitute cleanliness for beauty, mechanism for men, and hypocrisy for morals. It devotes so much energy to obtaining the means to make life possible, that it has none left to practise the art of living. Hot baths and more hot baths, larger and ever larger hotels, faster and ever faster cars, golf played by ever fatter and more vulgar men, and lap-dogs kept by ever fatter and more vulgar women, cocktails and culture, psycho-analysis and faith healing, sensual poetry and sensational sport, supported and maintained by an illiterate governing class ready to be imposed upon by any quack or charlatan who can persuade it to take an interest in what it imagines to be its soul, such is the probable development of bourgeois civilization in England.

Hints of the growing adhesion of the herd to the ideals and pursuits of big business

are not wanted in current developments of moral sentiment. As the profiteer supplants the aristocrat as the dominant force in the community, a slight twist is given to the moral opinions of the herd as a whole in order that they may be brought into line with the changed interests of the stronger. Moral sentiments suitable to the interests of a hereditary aristocracy of landed proprietors insensibly give place to a morality designed to protect and safeguard the pursuits of the fat man on holiday.

An example of this process is afforded by the changed attitude to hunting. A hundred years ago hunting was considered an entirely honourable pursuit, appropriate to gentlemen and advantageous to the countryside. To-day it is attacked on humanitarian grounds and voices are raised in favour of the fox. If he must be killed why not humanely? It was recently reported that a fox chased by the Cowdray hounds jumped through the window of a private residence and up the chimney flue. Efforts were made to smoke him out by lighting a fire immediately below, for all the world as if he were a boy chimney brush of a century ago instead of a fox, but they were unsuccessful. Ultimately workmen removed some bricks and the fox was got out and given to the hounds. This case

caused an outcry on the ground that the fox, who had given the hounds a good run, was the victim of cruel and unsporting conduct. A similar outburst was provoked by a hunted stag who recently took refuge in the Channel, and was picked up and carried to France.

That hunting is now condemned by the moral sense of the community not because of any increase in humanitarian sentiment, but because of a change in the interests of the predominant herd, is shown by the apathy of public opinion with regard to the victims of the gun and the motor. Business men unable to hunt because of the obesity produced by their habits are not debarred from shooting. Moors are hired in Scotland and all creatures liable to interfere with the supply of game are ruthlessly exterminated. Thus a squirrel-catching society has recently been formed in Aberdeenshire. Rewards are offered for each squirrel captured, and it is estimated that between two and three thousand squirrels are killed a year. At Monte Carlo business-men sit on terraces and shoot down pigeons which have been previously imprisoned in darkened boxes, with the result that, when they are let out into the sunlight, they are too dazed to fly away. Before they are placed in the boxes the tails of these birds are removed. This impedes their flight and makes things

easier for the business-men, who kill between sixty and a hundred an hour. But it is not thought, except by cranks, that the business-men are immoral for amusing themselves in this way, although it is illegal in England for boys to steal the eggs of many kinds of birds.

In the south of England, where the roads are tarred to facilitate the passage of motors and the approach of business-men is heralded over the countryside by a stink of tar and petrol, it is reported that the emanations from the roads have poisoned the waters of the Test and Itchen and caused the death of many of the living things that dwell in them. Even the fish, it seems, have begun to feel the march of progress.

Motors are frequently the cause of the death to hens, puppies, cats, and small children. Yet nobody thinks the business man's pursuit of motoring immoral. On the contrary, it is assumed without question that the road is his property, and that the pedestrian should make way for him, while the risk to life and damage to limb consequent upon his refusal to do so are regarded as the results of culpable folly and negligence on the part not of the motorist but of himself.

Business-men are given to amassing property, but not to making friends. It is not in personal relationships that they

seek the good life, but in a plenitude of goods. For this reason current herd morality visits offences against property with greater severity than offences against the person. A man will get six months for stealing a diamond necklace, but only six days for beating his wife. But, though the ill treatment of a wife by her husband is punished with comparative lightness, her appropriation by another man is considered to be the height of wickedness. This is because the man who makes love to his neighbour's wife is committing an offence against property. For the same reason the desire on the part of a wife to secede from her existing possessor and to be an independent entity maintaining herself by her own exertions is regarded with disfavour.[1] It is as if a valuable house were to insist that it should remain uninhabited.

Those who belong to a herd are in general unable to understand the wish of others to escape from it. Such a wish is an implied criticism upon the herd conception, and brings a sense of insecurity. Thus the desire for leisure and solitude, or for a life amid wild surroundings, is regarded with instinctive disapproval. A Frenchman recently exploring in Brazil came upon a party of Indians one of whom

[1] Cp. the success of A. S. M. Hutchinson's *This Freedom.*

had a paler skin than the others. The pale skinned Indian turned out to be his long-lost brother, who had lived among the Indians for a number of years. The explorer immediately set to work to persuade his brother to return with him to civilization. His efforts, however, proved unavailing. The brother asked why he should return to a community in which he had to pay taxes, wear clothes and do other disagreeable things, when he could live with the Indians in a state of nature without labour of any kind. The explorer had no answer to these questions. He was unable to understand this refusal to return to the herd and accept the restrictions that existence in the herd involves. Accordingly he told his brother that he was a hopeless degenerate, and left him to what he characteristically called his fate.

Something of the same feeling is entertained by the average man towards the artist or the writer. He distrusts the contempt of herd standards which his irregular life implies. This sentiment is reinforced by a feeling of insecurity in regard to possessions. The average man is too busy to spare time for sexual immorality, and instinctively suspects the life of the artist or writer because of the facilities which it accords for meddling with his wife during office hours. The general

nature of the objection entertained by the herd to sexual immorality will be examined more fully in the next chapter.

Before I close this chapter I wish to point out how the sentiments I have endeavoured to describe have been intensified by the decay of religion.

Communities in which the average man is the stronger have always been noted for their Puritanism and high moral standard. Promiscuity has historically been practised by the aristocracy rather than by the middle classes, and in societies in which the standard is set by the latter is visited accordingly with a disproportionate amount of moral obloquy. Severer steps would no doubt have been taken against it, had it not been for the conviction that the sinner would be punished hereafter. The poor man, lacking the rich man's goods, has comforted himself with the story of Lazarus. But the moral man has found equal consolation when denying himself the pleasures of the flesh, in picturing the eternal torments which awaited those who refused to be bound by his inhibitions.

The average moralist has accordingly refrained from punishing the successful libertine, knowing that God would do it for him. But this conviction is no longer held. God is a much more mysterious being than he used to be, and we have less

knowledge of his ways. It may be that he does not exist at all, and in any event the belief that he will do this or that, and, in particular, that he will entertain the same moral views as we do ourselves, is no longer entertained with its old time certainty. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay." Perhaps it is, but it might be visited on the wrong people. In any event it is safer to take no chances, and to make sure that sinners shall suffer in this world the punishment which the eccentricity of God's views may permit them to forego in the next. For this reason it is to be expected that the herd morality of the future will develop a severer outlook upon derelictions from the standards of behaviour which it regards as moral. What these derelictions are, and what are the reasons for supposing that in spite of this attitude they are likely to increase, I will consider in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### The New Liberty of Action

Important forces are, however, at work in the contrary direction. If the growing prevalence of herd morality will tend to place a new emphasis on the importance of uniformity, uniformity in the moral sphere is likely to prove more difficult of attainment.

Two factors in particular will militate against it. These are the growth of economic independence among women, and the practice of birth control. Let us consider these factors separately. 1. The basis of the institution of marriage is economic. Theological factors have of course played their part. The early Christian fathers, expecting the immediate end of the world, saw no reason to take steps to ensure the continuance of the race. The Christian hostility to the pleasures of the senses was, therefore, allowed to rage unchecked, and sexual intercourse was denounced as both wicked and unnecessary. As time passed, however, it was found that the world showed no signs of coming to an end, an inconsiderateness which led to the necessity for a

change of attitude. The Church met the situation with a complete *volte face*. It had previously stigmatized the sexual passions as so wicked that no Christian should be permitted to indulge them; it now pronounced them to be so sacred that no Christian should be permitted to indulge them without the sanction of the Church. The sanction of the Church was given in marriage, a device whereby the Fathers sought to control and to regulate the workings of a passion they were unable to ignore. Since then the Church has claimed both the ability and the right to sanctify sex, and has looked with disfavour upon marriages consummated by the State as an infringement of her monopoly.

But the fact that marriage has been instituted by God and cornered by the Church is not sufficient to account for its existence before the Christian epoch or its stability since. These rest upon an economic foundation.

Throughout the recorded history of civilization the only recognized way for a woman to make her living has been through her body. Her body being her one saleable asset, she could employ it in either of two ways. She could sell the use of it to one man for an indefinite period, or she could lease it to a number of men for short and strictly regulated

periods. The first method is known as marriage; the second as prostitution. The existence of these two, and of only these two, ways of gaining an economic livelihood has led to the formation of two unofficial women's Trade Unions, the Trade Union of wives and the Trade Union of prostitutes. The strength of these unions is directly proportional to their monopoly of the economic field, and far exceeds that of any recognized Union in the more strictly industrial sphere.

It is immediately obvious that any woman who was prepared to give for love or for nothing what other women were only prepared to give for maintenance was a blackleg of the most subversive type, and the whole force of organized female opinion has, therefore, been devoted to making her position impossible. The force of female opinion so directed is known as morality, and the bitterness with which the free lover, that is to say, the woman who loves outside the marriage tie or the prostitute's preserves, is denounced as immoral, is due to woman's unconscious recognition of the fact that she is cutting at the basis of the economic livelihood of her sex.

It is of course true that the two women's Unions are to some extent competitive, and that the existence of the prostitute

threatens the security of the wife while it guarantees the chastity of the young girl. For this reason there is and always will be hostility between the Unions. The wife's first commandment is the Deity's "Thou shalt have none other woman but me", and she is accordingly accustomed to regard the prostitute with horror, whereas she does not object to the existence of other wives, since this does not, at least in theory, threaten her own. For this reason, too, the method of earning a living adopted by the wife is generally preferred to that adopted by the prostitute, and is esteemed the more honourable by public opinion. So true is this that in most women the belief in the honourableness of wifehood has become second nature, the really nice woman feeling instinctively that the only decent way for her to live is on the earnings of some man. But while this feeling provokes hostility to members of the other Union, it is a hostility which cannot compare in bitterness with the scorn and hatred felt for the free lover. The reason for this is obvious. The number of women a man can have for money is limited by the extent of his income; the number of women he can have for nothing is limited only by the extent of his ability to find them. For this reason it is felt instinctively that the free lover is a greater

menace to society than the prostitute. The prostitute, indeed, is and always has been recognized as a social necessity. She guarantees the chastity of nice women by providing a necessary solace for men up to the comparatively late age at which modern economic conditions allow them to marry. Thus in Tsarist Russia the brothel was a State-recognized institution. The new brothel was formally opened by the police officer, and was hallowed by a religious ceremony in the course of which the premises were blessed by a Russian Orthodox priest.[1]

Sexual morality in men springs from the same economic source, but is more limited in scope and less fiercely embraced. This is a natural deduction from what has just been said. If the livelihood of women is bound up with the strict observance of the marriage tie, the maintenance of the moral restrictions upon which marriage as an institution depends is their special concern. In a purely promiscuous community the livelihood of women would be intolerably insecure. Hence women are the natural guardians of morality, knowing that it guarantees their bread and butter. It is not too much to say that morality as a going concern is kept up by women. Men on the whole, despite their strong

[1] *Report of Labour Delegation*, 1925.

property sense, are not interested in moral questions. They have not the woman's delight in nosing out scandals, and, except when they are whipped up into a state of moral horror by their women folk, are much too prone to live and let live. The attitude of deliberate uncharitableness towards erring sisters which the sex affects does not come naturally to men, and left to themselves, they would condone offences which their outraged spouses insist on punishing with social ostracism.

It is on the whole true to say that the moral sense, so far as sex is concerned, only begins to function in men after marriage and, except in the case of one's own daughter whose saleable value in the marriage market is thought to be diminished by inchastity, it centres upon the wife. Since the wife is in origin a piece of property purchased by the husband for his own enjoyment, to her must be extended the jealous guardianship which presides over property in general. The wife is the most valuable of a man's indoor possessions; in return for the use of her body he has agreed to maintain her in such dignity and leisure as he can afford. This obligation to maintain the wife is a permanent one persisting even after the enjoyment of her person has ceased. Thus when a wife divorces or lives apart

from her husband, he is usually required to maintain her, so long as she remains chaste. So soon, however, as she bestows the enjoyment of her person upon another, the obligation to maintenance ceases, presumably on the ground that the new consumer should be saddled with the obligation of keeping up what he enjoys. In nothing is the property basis of marriage more clearly discernible than in the 'dum casta' clause of the English divorce law.

It is upon the same economic basis that the husband's objection to infidelity chiefly rests. If another man is permitted to enjoy for nothing what he himself has purchased at a heavy outlay, the husband naturally feels aggrieved. He is also rendered ridiculous. It is for this reason that the cuckold is always presented in literature as a comic figure; he is in the position of a man who is unconsciously having his pocket picked. The husband's predilection for fidelity in the wife is thus as strong as the wife's demand for fidelity in the husband—at times it is even stronger—and springs from the same economic source. So long as the wife is in essence a piece of property, it is naturally felt that only the man who has paid for her should have the use of her; so long as a woman can only obtain her living by selling herself to a man,

she not unnaturally demands that others should not be allowed to undercut her.

We have spoken of this situation as if it existed in the present; but it is already in many respects an affair of the past. The history of the last fifty years has recorded the growing and continuous influx of women into wage-earning employment which bears no relationship to sex. Women cure the sick, plead in the law courts, teach in the schools, do manual labour in garden, field, factory, and workshop, and serve increasingly as clerks, typists and shop assistants. Three were recently found among the five hundred applicants for the post of public executioner in Hungary.

Men have not unnaturally resented this change. The dependence of women has on the whole suited them, and they do not like to see those whose economic helplessness has made them a natural prey to male predatoriness rendered capable of standing on their own feet. Having deliberately deprived women of the skill, the training, the knowledge, and the qualifications necessary to make their way in the world, men have then proceeded to justify themselves by proving the moral and intellectual inferiority of women from the fact that she is ignorant, unskilled and uneducated. When it is remembered that the same causes that have left

woman no alternative but concubinage (married or unmarried) or starvation, have compelled her, as often as not, to perform the duties of an unpaid housekeeper, it is not difficult to see how much man was the gainer by the transaction. But, unfortunately for him, he has been unable to stem the rising tide of feminism. It has long ceased to be true that a woman's only means of earning her living is by exploiting her sex-attraction, and all the evidence points to the fact that the number of women in wage-earning employment will be augmented in the future. This estimate leaves out of account the probability of the endowment of motherhood, which will place all mothers, whether married or unmarried, in the category of independent wage-earners.

The effect of this economic change upon the situation I have briefly sketched, and upon the moral sentiments to which it gives rise is likely to be twofold.

In the first place the unmarried woman will tend increasingly to form temporary, irregular unions. This result will follow:

(1) Because her knowledge that she can earn her living in other ways will not force her to demand from the man a pledge of life-long maintenance as the price of her love.

(2) Because knowing that she is not dependent upon a man for her livelihood, she will no longer have the incentive to pander to the man's demand for virginity in his prospective wife by remaining chaste until marriage.

(3) Because a man's abandonment of the connection which she has formed with him, a process commonly known as desertion, will not as heretofore leave her stranded without means of support.

(4) Because men will be less chary of forming temporary, sexual relationships with women, when they know that they are not expected to keep them.

In the second place the married woman will tend to mitigate her hostility to irregular unions formed by unmarried women when she realizes:

(1) That her husband's mistress, not being dependent upon him for support, will constitute a less formidable threat to her livelihood.

(2) That the possible transference of her husband's affections and consequent withdrawal of financial support will not leave her necessarily incapable of finding other employment.

(3) That, as the clear-cut line of demarcation between married and unmarried unions becomes obscured by the increase in the number of the latter, it will no longer be either possible or

necessary to put the unmarried mistress as completely beyond the pale of decent society as has been customary in the past.

From the above considerations it will be seen that the growing economic independence of women is likely, unless counteracted by other forces, to lead to a relaxation of the marriage tie, to an increase in irregular unions, and to a growing tendency to dispense with marriage altogether.

But, some critics will object, what about the children? Hitherto, I have left the children outside the scope of the argument, and it is high time to bring them in. This leads me to a consideration of the second of the two factors which I cited at the beginning of the chapter, the practice of birth-control.

II. That the practice of birth-control is likely to increase there can, I think, be no reasonable doubt. I am aware that there is considerable opposition to birth-control at the moment, and the various arguments are brought forward to discourage people from employing its methods. These arguments are not held on rational grounds, but are dictated by prejudices based on certain religious or political opinions which those who put them forward profess. It is said, for example, that birth-control is displeasing to the

Almighty, who invented sexual intercourse for the reproduction not of pleasure but of children; and it is thought, though not said, that it is injurious to the State because it will diminish the supply of cannon-fodder and cheap labour.

As regards the Almighty, whether he would agree with the views put forward by those who speak in his name is not known. Until, therefore, we can obtain a direct expression of his opinion on the matter, it is more prudent to assume that his attitude is non-committal, than to supply the place of knowledge by converting our conjectures into dogmas. As regards the supply of cannon-fodder, this is supposed to be important for consumption in future wars. Since, however, those who oppose birth-control on the ground that it will diminish the number of recruits, also hold that wars are inevitable owing to the pressure of expanding populations, it would seem that populations which cease to expand have no need to maintain large armies to protect them from the results of expansion.

The position of those who oppose birth-control being based on political and religious feelings of an emotional character is not, however, refutable by argument, or assailable by reason. Our business is not to reply to arguments which have no rational basis, but to estimate what

influence they are likely to have in the future.

There is, I think, little doubt that this influence will be a diminishing one. Much of the opposition to birth-control is little more than an expression of the generalized feeling of hostility which people experience in regard to anything that is new. Whether it be a new morality, a new sonata form, a new way of wearing the hair, a new kind of corset (or none at all), or a new saviour of mankind with which he is presented, man's natural and instinctive reaction is one of antagonism. The antagonism is provoked not by any intrinsic demerit in the thing that arouses it—indeed in fifty or a hundred years time it is embraced with acclamation as the last word in orthodoxy or good form — but simply by its newness. The suggestion that any way of life, of thought or of conduct can be better than that which they have hitherto followed wounds people's self-respect, and some time must elapse before they can overlook the offence.

This kind of objection applies in a marked degree to birth-control which challenges people's most intimate habits, and seems likely to effect a revolution in their conduct. It will, however, diminish as the idea of birth-control becomes familiar. The reaction of the normal Englishman to that which is new usually

passes through three phases. He says first "It is absurd", second "It is contrary to Scripture", and third "Of course! I knew it all the time". It will be seen that the opposition to birth-control has already passed into the second phase.

There is a further reason for the probable weakening of the anti-birth-control movement. The organized opposition to birth-control comes very largely from members of the upper and middle classes. These on an average have very much smaller families than the lower classes in whose interests they profess to oppose birth-control, and to whom they denounce it. The inevitable inference from this fact cannot continue indefinitely to remain undrawn, and, as soon as it is drawn, the lower classes will be able to gauge the sincerity of those who exhort them to choose between continence or children, while being themselves remarkable for neither.

Finally the knowledge of the use of contraceptives is bound in course of time to percolate through every social stratum. The advantages of birth-control to the individual are so obvious that few will refuse to avail themselves of the knowledge which the State, in the persons of the medical officers in charge of infant welfare centres, at present withholds;

while the disadvantages to the community of a system under which the lower strata proliferate unchecked, while the upper and middle classes barely keep up their numbers, and the exceptional man who has the talent and energy to climb from one stratum into another finds it necessary to sterilize himself in the process, will, in the shape of a rapidly deteriorating population, force themselves upon the notice of even the most pious.

Birth-control has come to stay; it has also knocked the bottom out of what is called sexual morality.

If the views put forward in the previous chapters be correct, if morality is the interest of the stronger, and if, where the stronger is the herd of average individuals, it expresses itself in disapproval of conduct from which the average, for whatever reason, shrink, then the driving force of morality is to be looked for not in any innate sanction but in the power which the herd possess of rendering intolerable the lives of those who flout its prejudices. But in order that the herd may be able to exercise this power, it must be in a position to detect the objects of its censure. This has been possible in the past owing to the unfortunate propensity of sexual irregularity to result in offspring. It is not easy to disguise the existence of a child, and, even if the

desperate course of overlaying or otherwise extinguishing it be adopted, the disposal of the corpse presents grave difficulties. Such a course is also open to the objection of doing grave violence to the humaner parental instincts. But birth-control precludes the necessity for children, and by so doing makes it possible to "sin" without being found out.

It is not to be expected that people will refuse to avail themselves of the liberty thereby conferred. Whether we are to infer that people are by nature sinful, or simply that a sin which has been manufactured by herd morality is not really a sin, is a question that does not immediately concern us. What does concern us is the impetus which this ability to avoid detection is likely to give to irregular intercourse. Birth-control combined with economic independence has brought a new freedom to women. Economic independence enables them to have children without going either to the altar or into the workhouse. The practice of birth-control makes it unnecessary even to have the children.

One further result of birth-control may be noticed before we pass on. This is the probable abolition of the double standard of morality for men and women after marriage. That adultery in a wife has always been considered to be more serious

than adultery in the husband the state of the law bears witness. Adultery in a wife is a sufficient cause for divorce, in a husband it[1] must be coupled with cruelty or desertion. This disparity of treatment has always caused grave offence to feminist organizations. Yet the reason for the difference is not far to seek. It arises from the economic dependence of the wife upon the husband. As the result of this dependence any children which the wife may acquire in the course of her adventures become a charge upon the husband, who is thus required to pay for the fruits of his own shame and another's enjoyment. It is true that he is, or ought to be, similarly responsible for the upkeep of the offspring which may result from his own adultery, but in this case he has at least had his pleasure and sinned his sin, and cannot in justice complain if his substance is consumed by its fruits. Where, however, adultery on the part of the wife does not carry with it a risk of children to be maintained by the husband, it becomes an offence neither more nor less serious than adultery on the part of the husband, and the double standard ceases accordingly to operate.

As a result of the above-mentioned

[1] In July, 1923, the law was amended and adultery in the husband became a sufficient ground of divorce.

considerations we may expect that the practice of birth-control will profoundly modify our sexual habits. It will enable the pleasures of sex to be tasted without its penalties, and it will remove the most formidable deterrent to irregular intercourse.

It is this consideration which lies at the root of the opposition to birth-control. Deep down in most of us there lurks something of the old Puritanical attitude, which insists that pleasure cannot or should not be had without paying for it. This at least is true of pleasures we do not share. And it is this sentiment which is outraged by the immunity from the consequences of sexual pleasure which birth-control confers. The Puritans objected to bear baiting not so much because of the pain which it gave to the bear, as because of the pleasure which it gave to the spectators. In the same way the great mass of decent middle class citizens object to birth-control not because of the evil which it does to the race, but because of the pleasure which it gives to those who practice it. The Puritans are up in arms; the dowagers, the aunts, the old maids, the parsons, the town councillors, the clerks, the members of Vigilance Committees and Purity Leagues, all those who are themselves too old to enjoy sex, too unattractive to obtain what they would wish to enjoy, or

too respectable to prefer enjoyment to respectability—in a word, the makers of public opinion—are outraged in their deepest feelings by the prospect of shameless, harmless and unlimited pleasure which birth-control offers to the young. And if they can stop it it will be stopped.

Hence concurrently with the increased freedom which economic independence and birth-control will give to young people, and to young women in particular, there is likely to be a growth in restrictive and purely inhibitory morality on the part of the middle-aged.

We are in, then, for a wave of Puritanism on the one hand combined with the possibility of a new liberty of action on the other. What will be the outcome?

## CHAPTER IV

### The Coming Clash

Before I endeavour to answer the question with which I concluded the last chapter, there are one or two additional considerations to which it is necessary to refer, since they must affect our estimate of the future.

I have spoken of the possibility of a new freedom for women due to birth-control and economic independence. Other factors are likely to make such freedom more imperative on social grounds and less intimidating on moral ones.

The first is the great and growing preponderance of women in the community. It is estimated that in Great Britain there are already two million more women than men, and the figures can no doubt be paralleled from other Western European countries. Our present moral code condemns these two million, and as many more as the number of bachelors involves, to perpetual celibacy and sterility. In other words one woman out of every ten is expected to deny herself the right to motherhood or to become an outcast from decent society.

This system is intolerable; it is manifestly breaking down in many directions, and it continues at all only because public opinion among women is still too unorganized to protest against it. It is already the subject of wholesale disregard and infringement in practice, and it will be abolished in theory as soon as the social sense of the community has progressed to the point of removing the stigma from illegitimacy and the reproach from unmarried motherhood. In other words the system is bound up with the man-made convention which insists that the right to have a child shall be saddled with the duty of looking after a man, and, since there are not enough men to go round, women will sooner or later be forced in self-defence to permit themselves to have children without husbands.

So far as the right to sexual experience, independently of the right of motherhood, is concerned, this is already safeguarded by birth-control. The growing surplus of women will tend, therefore, through the sheer pressure of virginity, to promote an increase in irregular relationships, and to reinforce the movement towards freedom already described.

Nor will religious considerations deter with their traditional force. I have already spoken of the decline of religious sentiment in connection with the growth

of moral rigour in the herd. Lacking the conviction that God will punish wrong-doers, they arrogate the right to themselves. But the same scepticism which lights the fires of the heresy-hunters encourages the wickedness of the heretics. If marriages were not made by God, and torment in hell is probably not the result of adultery, there is no longer reason to think that five minutes' bliss must be paid for in terms of eternal damnation. It is, no doubt, true, that God still loves the pure, but when earthly lovers are available, the price of God's love may be not worth the paying. Hence the religious argument, though doubtless it will operate as a brake in a diminishing number of cases, will no longer act as a wholesale deterrent.

A more serious consideration is put forward in the name of biology. "You are," the biologist will point out, "conducting your argument on the basis of certain assumptions with regard to the nature of women, since you predict an increase in sexual irregularity not only among men, but also, and inevitably, among women. Men, it is agreed, are regrettably promiscuous, in the sense that, even if they are monogamous in fact, they are varietist by inclination. But women are different. Their nature is not varietist but monogamous, and it will,

in spite of all changes of material circumstances and moral sentiments, remain so. For this reason irregular sexual unions will not increase in the manner you predict."

Biological arguments of this type, derived from the alleged nature of women, are in my view mere man-made superstitions. The particular argument in question was invented by the peccant male who wished to convince himself that, however flagrant his own infidelities, his wife would remain faithful because it was her nature. The superstition was also useful, because it implied that, although a life of unvarying fidelity might do violence to his natural proclivities, he need suffer no qualm of conscience in expecting and exacting conduct which he repudiated for himself from his monogamous wife. The notion too was flattering and appealed readily to male conceit.

Now as to the existence of the facts asserted by my imaginary biologist, there is, I imagine, little doubt. There are, of course, countless exceptions either way, but the general tendency is not obscure. While the cases of My Lord and the barmaid are legion, those of My Lady and the groom are notoriously few. But admitting the fact, are we to regard it as necessarily unalterable? Many, I know, are inclined to do so. Contemplating the

domestic tragedies springing from the nomadic tendencies of the male, they have seen in them one more piece of evidence for the satirical plan on which they believe the Universe to have been constructed. If indeed there be design in the scheme of things, to what sort of design do the facts point? To have made man polygamous and woman monogamous they regard as God's worst practical joke, and conclude that, whatever may have been the objects and disposition of the creator of the Universe, they were certainly not those of a gentleman.

But is the fact really unalterable? May it not be the outcome of centuries of servitude and seclusion, made absolute by the knowledge that fidelity meant bread and butter and a home, infidelity starvation or the streets? Since the beginnings of recorded history the great bulk of women have, it is true, remained monogamous, but they may have done so from fear of losing their jobs as wives if they did not. Those who have been rich enough to stand upon their own financial feet, or powerful enough to snap their fingers at public opinion, have not been remarkable for strict observance of the marriage tie. The cases of Messalina, Catherine the Great and the modern film star, not to mention a score of less notorious instances, are instructive. Significant

too is the frequency of divorce among those who are sufficiently well to do to afford the enormous fees exacted by the legal profession from those who wish to change their partners. It is difficult, in the face of evidence of this kind, to avoid the conclusion that the monogamous tendencies of women are the product of training, circumstance, and environment, and will not outlast the economic disabilities which produced them.

In any event the present existence of these tendencies, if tendencies they be, affords no indication of what they may become in the future. The fact that the primitive savage could only count on the fingers of one hand does not invalidate the existence of the multiplication table, any more than the fact that most women want only one man each now proves that they will not want more in a hundred years. The use of the word 'natural' begs the question. We acquire those characteristics which our circumstances and environment demand, and then transmit them to our children in whom, being inherited, they are termed natural. But this does not mean that our children will not in due course develop new characteristics of their own, if a change of circumstances renders the old ones undesirable. There are signs indeed that the new characteristics are already begin-

ning to appear. The attitude of representative up-to-date women on this subject is curious. They tend to deny the difference between males and females which my imaginary biologist alleged, and to declare that their inclinations are naturally as promiscuous as those of their husbands. The circumstance that they control them better argues, they assert, more sense; it does not imply a difference in nature.

Remarks of this kind are often made by women who, nevertheless, live exemplary lives and would scorn to revenge themselves upon an unfaithful husband by imitating his conduct. Nevertheless there is no reason to suppose that they deliberately misrepresent their feelings, and we can only conclude that, as usually happens, a new tendency is manifesting itself in feeling some time before it is translated into action.

For these reasons I do not think that any convincing arguments as to the future can be based on the alleged monogamousness of women in the present. Nor, so soon as the force of the monogamous habit wanes, do I think that women will consent to put up with the manifest disadvantages of a system which is based upon the assumption that it is as strong as it ever was. It is certain that they will not be deterred by the protests of outraged

males. Conventional morality, as I have already pointed out, like many of our other institutions such as matinées, concerts and God, is kept going by women, and directly women withdraw their support, not all the opposition of men will avail to save it.

What then is likely to happen?

Certainly not a relapse into complete promiscuity. The belief that people are fundamentally licentious, and that a partial removal of the barriers with which society has hedged about the business of reproduction will precipitate the population into a welter of unbridled license, pleasantly shocking though it is to the minds of respectable people, has absolutely no foundation in fact.

This belief springs from the doctrine of original sin, which has always been popular among quiet and well-behaved persons. If man is by nature wicked and sinful, and woman is very little better, then, indeed, contraception and the economic independence of women will lead to an orgy of sex indulgence in which the population will shuffle itself like a pack of cards.

Nothing of the kind is likely to happen.

The purely sexual elements in love have come to occupy an entirely disproportionate amount of attention owing to the taboos with which they have been

invested. Once these taboos are removed, they will revert to their natural position of comparative unimportance. If it were permissible to reproduce the sexual act upon the stage we should all lose our interest in chorus girls' legs. Moreover, playwrights would not trouble to avail themselves of the permission.

Within reason, continence and constancy are natural to human beings. It is only the intolerable strain to which our absurd social arrangements have subjected them that has caused us to regard ourselves as being by nature unfaithful and incontinent. There is no ground for the belief that the average man or woman who allow themselves to be guided by their own impulses must needs be scoundrels. For among their impulses must be numbered self-respect, moderation, and a sense of what is right and fitting. Because this sense may be, and often is, at variance with the herd morality which is crystallized in the law, it does not mean that it does not exist. On the contrary, it may be in advance of the morality it disowns, so that people thrown helpless on their passions may find that honesty, that self-respect, that hatred of cowardice and deceit, and the desire for cleanliness, health, and efficiency were master passions disciplining them far more effectively

than the artificial inhibitions of a mediaeval morality based on an obsolete religion and deriving its power from lethargy and fear.

Some changes in social arrangements there will no doubt be. In Russia, for example, where the knowledge of birth-control is accessible to all classes, where any two parties by agreement, or either of the two parties by request, may obtain a divorce, and where no stigma is placed upon illegitimacy, there has been a considerable relaxation of the family system.[1] If this means, as it probably does, that unhappy families have broken up and that husbands and wives who disliked each other have availed themselves of the opportunity to make a fresh start, we need not regret the change. Nobody would contend that society is the gainer by condemning the unhappily married to a lifetime of domestic misery, and it is difficult to see why the common sense of the community which considers the wishes of the parties concerned a sufficient ground for consummating their marriage does not regard the wishes of the same parties as a sufficient reason for terminating it.

On the other hand it is unlikely that

[1] *Report of Labour Delegation*, 1925. It is interesting to note that this relaxation has taken place concurrently with a marked decrease in prostitution.

those who are happily married will rush to the Registrar with the object of making themselves miserable by separating, simply because reasonable divorce laws give them the opportunity to do so. It would be an interesting experiment, and one which would enable us to estimate the extent of marital unhappiness, to proclaim a day of conjugal amnesty at recurring intervals. We might, for example, celebrate the coronation of every new king by giving to all married couples the right to dissolve their marriages, and seek other mates. If advantage were not taken of the facilities offered within twenty-four hours, there would be a compulsory reversion to the *status quo ante*. Or it might be better to fix definite periods between the days of amnesty, so that they would recur at regular intervals. Each general election might serve as a signal for a conjugal General Post, so that couples would have the chance of gaining their freedom every five years. I myself would advocate the institution of such amnesties, although I believe that the amount of conjugal dislocation they would cause would be surprisingly small. It is difficult to avoid feeling sentimental at the prospect of parting even from those whom we dislike, and the fact that couples were no longer bound in law would only tighten the bonds of

sentiment. A would feel that, unpleasant as B had been, he could not very well let her down, and B would shrink from leaving A with no one to look after him, even when she had herself looked after him very badly. You cannot, in short, live with any one for a number of years without dreading the prospect of their loss. The knowledge, moreover, that quinquennial escape was possible might lead to married people treating their partners with at least the degree of civility they at present reserve for their acquaintances. I do not think, therefore, that the changes caused by a conjugal amnesty would be very extensive.

For the above reasons I conclude that the social results of the changes I have been describing will amount to little more than a diminution in the number of unhappy marriages, and an increase in the number of experimental unions.

But it is not to be supposed that the herd will see the matter in this light. Nothing exceeds the license taken by the imaginations of very rigid people, and there is little doubt that the vast mass of respectable citizens, appalled and horrified by what they will insist on regarding as the prospect of growing and unlimited license, will rise to meet the situation with panic and persecution. And since, for the reasons already given,

morality in a modern community is that kind of conduct which suits the stronger, we may expect a revival of Puritanism expressing itself in a new robustness and acerbity in the moral sense of the herd.

Symptoms of this revival are not wanting in this country. If, however, we wish to see the clearest portents of what is coming we must, as I have hinted above, look to America. America, as I have already pointed out, leads the world in morals as in everything else. That American citizens set great store by morality is notorious. With their constant Purity Crusades, Puritan pogroms, Vigilance Committees, and popular juries of selected citizens, who visit surreptitiously and report upon the moral tone of New York plays, they put our more decadent civilization to shame. On what sort of lines do these engines of American morality take action? One instance must suffice. In April of this year, one Miss Jewell Barker went bicycling in white knickers. Her outraged neighbours showed their sense of this vicious act by proceeding to seize and flog Miss Barker's father. This is at once to usurp and to invert the divine privilege of visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children.

America is, of course, pre-eminently the Land of Liberty, and we cannot hope to

emulate her highest feats. Efforts are, however, not wanting of our endeavours to live up to the standard our cousins set.

I will quote at random one or two American examples with their British parallels.

*America.* There is sumptuary legislation designed to check the license of the stage. "There is", we are told, "a rule in some American towns that the chorus girls must wear stockings, although the principals are allowed to appear with bare legs".

*England.* In recent months there has been a strong provincial movement against the indecency and unpleasantness of the plays produced in London. Respectable citizens complain that they never can tell what salacious beastliness may not be sprung upon their protesting eyes and ears, what searchlight cast upon the Augæan stables of high society. Actors and actresses have expressed their views, pointing out that a pure stage is as good a paying proposition as a nasty one, and invoking the case of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas to bear witness to the truth of their contention. These operas, a notorious commercial success, have never been known to bring a blush to the most bourgeois cheek. A number of London women have accordingly banded themselves together vowing to purify the

stage. Protests are to be made nightly in theatres at which plays to which objection is taken are performed. "We shall stick at nothing," said the leader of the campaign, "to make our protest effective".

Concurrently with this development there has arisen a demand for a stricter censorship. I think it probable that we are on the threshold of a period resembling the early seventeenth or middle nineteenth centuries, when life as it is will be driven off the stage by the Puritans' demand for life as it ought to be, love will give place to sentiment, and reality to romance.

*America.* A new teetotal version of the Bible is promised from America. The festive passages are all dry, the words 'raisin cake' taking the place of the word 'wine' wherever the latter occurs in the Authorized Version. Thus we have "And he dealt to everyone of Israel, both men and women, to everyone a roll of bread, a portion of meat and a cake of raisin".

*Scotland.* Steps were taken in the spring of this year to transfer to Scotland a film depicting the explorations of Livingstone. An extract from the daily paper tells us that "Prohibitionists there are already strenuously objecting to the incident which shows Livingstone, after he has been found by Stanley, drinking champagne with his rescuer! The difficulty

is that the incident is historically correct . . . and the problem is whether truth should be suppressed in the interests of morality. 'At any rate' said the Secretary of the London Missionary Society 'the raising of the question *is evidence of the progress made since his time.*'" It can scarcely be doubted that if the meeting had taken place to-day, Livingstone would have acknowledged the march of progress by drinking water.

A straw shows the direction of the wind, and I should not be at all surprised to see Scotland go dry in the next fifty years, especially if she is successful in obtaining Home Rule. If Scotland goes dry, it is not to be expected that England will fail ultimately to follow suit. The increase in efficiency among dry workmen is very great, and if the business men remain "the stronger" in the community, they cannot continue indefinitely to be blind to its advantages, especially as they themselves would be immune from the hardships it entails. If we ask whether an officially dry but unofficially wet business class, and a working class which is dry both officially and unofficially, does not mean one law for the rich and another for the poor, our answer is that conventional morals always does mean this.[1]

[1] Cp. the case of the legs of the chorus and the principals, p. 70.

The practice of virtue, we are often told, is dependent upon the possession of a sufficient income. It is only the well to do who can afford to be generous, honest, and unselfish, because they have no temptation to be otherwise. But what is true of virtue is equally true of vice, and the experience of the working of prohibition in America shows how easy it is for the rich to procure illicit indulgences which are out of the reach of the poor.

There is likely to be legislation against wantonness in dress. By wantonness is meant the practice among females of unnecessarily exposing parts of their body. The curious belief that the body is in some way disgraceful, and that the exhibition of it is, therefore, wicked is very prevalent among Western peoples. It arises partly from natural prudery, partly from the property view of marriage, and partly from the inclemency of the climate which makes bathing a comparative rarity. The Japanese who have a bath twice a day, observe no discrimination between the sexes in their bathing. "One day", said the Marquis of X who had just returned from Japan, "my wife went to have a bath, and she got as far as the rinsing stage when two young Japanese came in. She had to take refuge in the tank, screaming at the top

of her voice until the two young men were taken away. They no doubt thought her a very fastidious young woman".

The conviction that the body is wicked and ought to be concealed is important, because it leads women to expose portions of it which they would otherwise protect, and rightly protect, from the rigours of the atmosphere, in the belief that they are making themselves attractive. Thus women swathed in layers of furs in respect of the rest of their persons, will venture forth on the coldest day with bare bosoms and open-work stockings. It is with the same object that, though their religion bids them mortify the flesh and refrain from making of themselves a stumbling block to others, they will appear at dinner with necks, bosoms, backs, and arms completely naked, a proceeding not only acquiesced in but encouraged by their males. This sort of thing is anathema to the herd, who cannot afford the evening dress and the furs, and to the old, the condition of whose bodies does not, except in the case of the incurably optimistic, permit them to take the same liberties as their daughters. Hence we may expect a considerable stiffening of public opinion in the matter of decorum in dress and a return to the days in which everything except the hands and the face was carefully covered up.

In the sphere of what is called sexual morality we may expect a growing tendency to make wickedness (that is to say conduct which is not in the interests of the stronger) punishable by law. Attempts will be made, and successfully made, to multiply crimes by Act of Parliament.

A good example of this tendency will be found in the Bill entitled *The Children, Young Persons, etc., Bill,* introduced by a Labour Member during the tenure of office by the Labour Government in 1924. It represents bourgeois or herd morality "in excelsis." It is known as the *Offences against the Person Bill,* and its object is to codify and extend the existing enactments against abortion, cruelty to children, offences against children, and neglect of children. Many of its provisions are admirable and afford what is no doubt a necessary protection to children against suffering and neglect. Nevertheless it menaces individual liberty in two ways. In the first place it increases the number of offences punishable by law, often in an arbitrary manner. For example, it is made a crime punishable by two years hard labour for a girl of sixteen to have intercourse with a young man of eighteen, the criminal being not, as one might have expected, the elder of the two parties

concerned, but the girl. She alone is liable to imprisonment; the young man is allowed to go free. It is also a criminal offence to conceal the birth of a dead child, to cause or encourage a child to beg, or to celebrate the marriage of a boy and a girl under sixteen, such marriages being declared invalid.

In the second place the Bill authorizes grave interference with personal privacy. The officers and inspectors charged with executing its multifarious provisions are given unlimited powers of search, and authorized in certain cases to arrest without warrant. Even if a bill of this kind were to be administered by angels or sages, the opportunities for espionage and surveillance which it bestows would be sufficiently offensive. Since, however, its provisions will in fact be enforced by inspectors and constables drawn from the lower middle classes, who will be only too willing to denounce as flagrant immorality whatever transcends the experience of Clapham, the measure stands revealed as an attempt to endow the herd with increased powers of interference and control over the private lives of those who venture to stand outside it.

Encouragement would also be given to malevolent and offensive persons who wished to do harm to their neighbours by laying information against them. In

general, liberty would be diminished, offences multiplied, and the individual rendered more subservient to public opinion than is the case to-day.

Another expression of herd feeling will be a growing tendency to enquire into the private lives of those who hold public appointments. The herd, that is to say, will increasingly demand of those who fill positions of eminence and authority in the land that they shall conform in practice, and profess to conform in belief, to the code of prejudices and preferences which it pretentiously calls its morals. Even to-day, at the end of half a century of individualist thinking, fitness to perform a particular job is one of the least important qualifications in a candidate. What is important is that he shall be a member of a recognized religious sect, such as the Church of England or one of the sub-sects of Nonconformity, that he shall live with one wife, avoid divorcing and being divorced, and display studiously temperate habits. He must also exercise discretion in his public utterances, be judiciously but not violently patriotic in his sentiments, eschew extreme views in politics, refrain from supporting unpopular causes, and on all occasions give the herd the answers it expects. Thus in Wales it is difficult if not impossible for a man to hold any public

appointment unless he is a member of a particular chapel, and at English Universities many teaching posts are reserved for those in Holy Orders. Given the capacity for reflecting the opinions and flattering the prejudices of the many, men of acknowledged incompetence may successfully aspire to the most responsible posts. There is indeed no post in the country a man cannot hold with credit, if he can only succeed in holding his tongue.

Conformity rather than intelligence is more particularly required of those who seek to instruct the young. A man's ability to demonstrate the differential calculus or impart the facts of history would not, it is true, appear to be lessened by his having passed through the divorce court. Yet there is no doubt that such an event will cast a blight upon his career as a teacher. People are too satisfied with their own ways of thought and habits of conduct to wish for their children anything better than that they should think and act as they do themselves. What is demanded of the teacher, therefore, is that he should transmit to the children the same beliefs as those which are held by their parents. He must hold up to their admiration those things which their parents consider to be admirable, such as God, vaccination,

monogamy, the Treaty of Versailles and the capitalist system, and speak with scorn and contempt of Bolshevism, atheism, Germany, free love and agitators, whom parents consider to be evil. When the teacher does this he is what is called a safe man. He inspires confidence and obtains preferment. Provided, in short, that he guarantees not to teach anything new, his capacity to teach anything at all is not seriously questioned. And, since the best minds of every generation, being in advance of their time, would prefer not to teach at all rather than to perpetuate the dogmas in which they have ceased to believe, the successful teacher is not always remarkable for intelligence.

In any event, whether intelligent or not, he must conform, and will have to do so increasingly. The herd morality which drove a statesman of the calibre of Dilke out of public life because it disapproved of his private life, is, after a temporary relapse, increasing in strength, and in the immediate future nobody who does not profess the morality to which the middle classes adhere will stand any chance of public office. If a man's actions belie his professions he must be careful to conceal them.

One of the results of this development will be an increase in hypocricy. To-day the agnostic don at Oxford worships regularly in the College Chapel,

and men will be driven increasingly to give lip-service to ideals and shibboleths which in their hearts they despise. In general, the gulf which separates public profession and private practice, a gulf which has made England a byword for hypocrisy, will grow wider. Driven to profess the beliefs of shopkeepers, men will rely increasingly upon their private judgment as a sanction for their conduct. Hence the attempt to impose a uniform standard based upon an obsolete morality upon our public men may lead to a revival of that unfashionable organ the private conscience, and those from whom an unwilling conformity is exacted in public, will insist that they and they alone are the judges of what is right and wrong in private.

I have taken the *Offences against the Person Bill* as a typical instance of the kind of legislation in which the new Puritanism may express itself. It indicates a return to the Greek conception that men can be made good by Act of Parliament. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this conception was regarded with disfavour. As the result of the individualist thinking of the preceding fifty years, the idea that there was one good life which all men ought to lead had been abandoned. The individualist view was that there were different kinds of good lives for different men, as many in

fact as there were men to live them, and that it was, therefore, impracticable to establish by law a positive standard of ethical conduct to which all must conform. In so far as law had any function in the matter, it was, by prohibiting violence and the cruder forms of robbery, to guarantee to the community a certain background of order without which no good life was possible. Since the mere process of obeying the law did not make a man a good man but only restrained him from certain unappetizing kinds of vice by which no decent upper or middle class citizen was attracted, it followed that the function of the law was negative merely; its object was to prevent citizens from so conducting themselves that nobody could be virtuous, not to define virtue or to tell men how to attain it. The definition of virtue was a matter for the individual's insight, and the attainment of virtue a matter for the individual's conscience; provided, therefore, that a man abstained from the grosser forms of anti-social conduct which were prohibited by law, the question of what he ought to do, and what refrain from doing, was one which he alone could decide.

I believe that this nineteenth and early-twentieth century libertarianism in matters of thought and conduct is decreasing and will continue to decrease. The cult

of uniformity is hostile to the liberty of the individual, and in order to secure the performance of conduct of which the herd approves, the legislature is likely to assume a more positive control over men's lives than has been customary in the past. We shall, in other words, revert to the conception of one good life for all men, or rather for all poor men, a good life which it is conceived to be the business of the State and of public opinion to promote.

Summing up, therefore, we may predict the immediate future somewhat as follows: Coming into contact with the increased facilities for freedom of action to which reference has been made, the new itch to regulate men's lives will lead to persecution and heresy-hunting. Men will be hounded out of public life because of their private morals, and acceptance of certain habits of belief and codes of conduct will be made indispensable to the holding of public appointments. Instead of choosing for a post the man who is best qualified to do the job, we shall choose the man who most nearly reflects the habits of thought and conduct of the selection board, that is to say, of the herd who elected the selection board to represent them. The growth of Puritanism will bring a growth in hypocrisy, a fruitful and invaluable offshoot of Puritanism. There will be an even greater disparity

between men's practices and their professions than there is at present, and their professions will tend increasingly to condemn their practices. The world, in short will become a paradise for the average man and a hell for the exceptional one.

So much we may expect during the next fifty years. If, however, I am asked which of the two opposing tendencies I have attempted to describe in this book will ultimately prevail, my answer is that it will not be the bourgeois Puritanism whose apparent victory I foresee in the immediate future. Nor, indeed, do I think that that victory will be more than apparent.

The history of morals, like that of politics, follows the swing of the pendulum, and some reaction on the part of each generation from the habits of its fathers seems to be inevitable. In so reacting it reverts to those of its fathers' fathers. Thus each generation tends to take the gods of its grandfathers from the shelf upon which its fathers have placed them.

To-day we are at the beginning of a period of reaction from the license of the War. The difference between young people of between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four and their predecessors of seven years ago is very marked. The latter were casual, offhand, and easy-going. They observed little ceremonial

in their relationships with each other, smoked, flirted and made love when and where they pleased, married in haste and repented at leisure or dispensed with marriage altogether, and despised rather than revered the aged to whom they were a constant source of horror and amazement. What is perhaps most noticeable about their successors to-day is their improvement in manners. They are chivalrous to women, considerate to the old, maintain a decorum at dances which is positively Victorian, and instead of hastening to establish sexual relations with whomsoever attracts them, have actually gone out of their way to postpone the fruition of their desires by a reintroduction of the rite known as "engagement".

In particular, women, no longer treated as the equals of men, are alternatively worshipped and disregarded, blown aloft like soap bubbles or jettisoned as lumber. The reaction, in short, is already well under weigh, and its influence for many years to come will be great.

But the normal cycle of action and reaction, of licentious eighteenth and Puritanical nineteenth centuries, depends for its recurrence on the entrance of no new factors; it is bound up that is to say with the property status of women and the production of children as the fruit of sexual intercourse. Once new factors

are introduced, it may well be thrown permanently out of gear. Birth control and the economic independence of women are to my mind factors of this kind. The changes they portend are incalculable, and, though their full effects may be delayed for two or three decades, no Puritan revival nor any number of such revivals, whether backed by the law or finding expression in public opinion merely, will in the long run be able to stand against them.

I am conscious that what I have written in this book will seem to many to be cynical and disruptive. I shall be charged with taking a low view of human nature, and speaking slightingly of morality. My answer is, first, that what I have written of in these pages is not human nature as a whole, but that part of human nature only which expresses itself in what is called morality; and secondly, that what is called morality is not in any true sense of the word morality at all. Morality, as I understand it, is positive; it insists that certain things are good and ought to be pursued even if the heavens fall. But the habits of thought and standards of conduct I have analyzed in this book, although they are called morality, are not positive but negative. Their appeal is to men's fears rather than to their hopes;

they tell them not what they must do to be saved, but what they must not do if they are to avoid the censure of society. Their basis is the instinct to possess, and their weapon the power to blame. Men blame those who claim a liberty they dare not assert for themselves, and dignify with the name of morality the indulgence of possessive instincts in which savages glory without hypocrisy. "What could I have done in the circumstances?" asked the husband of an erring wife in a recent society scandal case, "If you ask me to tell you I will. You could have told your wife that if she went with the man again, you would get her divorced. You could then have gone up to London and assaulted Sir X Y, and to hell with your career", replied the eminent counsel on the other side.

This is the law of the jungle; it is the expression of most of what passes for morality to-day, and, while it prevails, there is little hope for the world. Of positive morality which brings the conviction that some things are good and ought to be pursued for their own sake, there has never been less. It is doubtful indeed whether a positive morality can exist without a strong and lively religious feeling, and religion was never at so low an ebb.

The emotional enthusiasm which religion

generates is indispensable to a true morality. For good or for evil religion is the looser of great forces. It may be captured and made to serve base ends, but under the influence of the emotion which it creates men can be brought to believe that some things *are* better than others, and to overcome any obstacle in order that the good things may prevail. It is this belief which is lacking in the world to-day.

Until, then, the life-force can contrive again to send a great religious teacher into the world, a true, positive morality will be lacking. The man who is born in England will continue to believe that it is right to marry one wife, and the man who is born in Persia will continue to believe that it is right to marry four, and each will invoke morality to justify his belief. Such morality is merely topographical; it reflects no conception of what is good, and it gives us no hope that the world can be made better because it does not believe that its own world is bad.

Meanwhile the less we write and think about morality the better. A world without religion is a sad and a tiring world because it lacks an object, and for this reason there have been few generations which have known less happiness than our own. In such a world those who think the least have the best of it. In such a

world reflection can only produce despondency, and it is better to take our professions and prejudices ready made from the social shop, than to embark on a sea of troubles by thinking out a morality for ourselves, to act with the business man rather than to brood with the philosophers.

In a new and positive morality in which men can believe lies the hope for the world; yet such a morality cannot come without a revival of religion. Religion and religion alone gives the driving force which impels men to change things, and until a religious attitude to the world again becomes part of man's common heritage, all the apparent changes in morality, of which different ages and countries are the witnesses, will fail to disguise the fundamental fact that there is no morality to change.

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